

referred to ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, and SADC, the South African Development Community.

Statement on a Third Consecutive Budget Surplus

February 18, 2000

Today we received further evidence that our economic strategy of fiscal discipline is working. When I came into office, the debt had quadrupled over the previous 12 years. The deficit had reached a record \$290 billion and was projected to keep rising as far as the eye could see. As a result, interest rates were high and growth was slow. We have turned this around with strong deficit reduction packages in 1993 and 1997 and tough choices in each and every budget. As a result, we have enjoyed back-to-back budget surpluses for the first time in over 40 years.

The latest financial numbers from the Department of the Treasury indicate that we are on track this year to reach a third consecutive budget surplus. The surplus in the first 4 months of this fiscal year was \$25 billion larger than the surplus last year. These surpluses will allow us to repay a projected \$157 billion in debt this year alone, bringing the debt reduction over 3 years to nearly \$300 billion. If we maintain our strategy of fiscal discipline, we can keep our economy strong and pay down the debt by 2013 for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President.

Message on the Observance of Presidents' Day, 2000

February 18, 2000

I am pleased to join all Americans in observing Presidents' Day.

Today we salute the leadership and achievements of all those who have held America's highest elected office, and we celebrate with special pride the rich legacies of Presidents Washington and Lincoln.

As our first President, George Washington gave strength and legitimacy to our young democracy while ensuring that the newly formed federal government remained accountable to the American people. A leader

of exceptional courage and vision in both war and peace, he helped shape the 13 colonies into a nation dedicated to the values of liberty and justice for all.

More than 70 years later, Abraham Lincoln sought to reunite Americans behind these same fundamental values. Through the extraordinary hardship and sacrifice of the Civil War, he remained devoted to the causes of freedom and equality and to preserving our Union. In the waning days of that cruel conflict, he showed remarkable compassion and determination in his efforts to bind our nation's wounds and restore dignity to all our people.

It was within view of our national monuments to these two great leaders that thousands of our fellow Americans recently joined Hillary and me to welcome the first moments of the 21st century. The era of unrivaled prosperity and peace in which we now live affords us a singular opportunity to reaffirm the values that guided Washington and Lincoln and that have shaped our national character and destiny for more than 200 years. By strengthening our democracy, embracing equal justice and opportunity, and celebrating our diversity, we can continue to build the America that they envisioned and strived so hard to achieve.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful celebration.

Bill Clinton

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 15

In the morning, the President met with President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan in the Oval Office.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rear Adm. Keith W. Lippert as a member of the Committee for the Purchase